

Scoping for the Wooten Wildlife Area Floodplain Management Plan

Edited 9/09/11 GM

Introduction

The WDFW 2011-2017 Strategic Plan emphasizes conservation of fish and wildlife as a central focus. That plan was developed with principles to conserve and restore biodiversity, ensure the health of our ecosystems, and ensure sustainable social and economic utilization of Washington's fish, wildlife and habitat natural resources. In addition, Director Anderson has initiated a Conservation Initiative with pilot projects that involves multiple WDFW programs and disciplines. Implementation of the salmon recovery plan and the BPA salmon enhancement effort in the Tucannon River makes it imperative for WDFW to reevaluate our management and maintenance activities in the Tucannon watershed. The Tucannon Lakes are in need of repair to maintain fishing opportunities and the levees must be maintained to meet the the Department of Ecology requirements for dam safety. A large woody debris (LWD) project is planned for implementation soon within the Wildlife Area and final internal coordination and agreement is needed soon. The intent to develop a floodplain management plan to restore and enhance the natural resources and recreational opportunities on the W. T. Wooten Wildlife Area is consistent with both the WDFW Strategic Plan and the Director's Conservation Initiative, as well as for meeting the needs of Tucannon Lakes management and the LWD project. Development of this plan will require the involvement of WDFW staff from most of the agency programs and divisions, and several staff from various disciplines from within the District 3 Team.

The WDFW, co-managers and interested public have an opportunity to restore habitat conditions, and river and floodplain functions, on the Wooten WA to substantially improve fish and wildlife habitats and populations while at the same time enhancing educational opportunities and recreational experiences. The floodplain of the Wooten WA is an appropriate size and location to be able to provide a substantial benefit to many species, by providing a diverse set of habitat conditions and restoring ecological functions to the river, the floodplain and the

riparian vegetation. All of these goals should be possible while still providing many quality recreational opportunities for the public. WDFW should be a leader in showing the public and others the potential for restoring habitat conditions and ecological functions in floodplains. Where else is a better location to show the public what can be done to create the best fish and wildlife habitat conditions along a stream system, and enhance fish and wildlife populations. We believe that the intent of this floodplain management plan on the Wooten WA is consistent with several of the key initiatives identified in the agency Strategic Plan (e.g. renewing our conservation focus, addressing climate change, supporting sustainable fishing and hunting).

Purpose

Development of a comprehensive Floodplain Management Plan for the Wooten WA that will (directly from the 2011-17 WDFW Strategic Plan):

- A. Enhance conservation practices to improve protection and restoration of fish, wildlife and habitat
- B. Increase protection and restoration of ecosystem functions
- C. Enhance and improve land and water stewardship to meet conservation goals
- D. Increase the economic benefits and public participation derived from sustainable fish and wildlife opportunities

Goals

- 1. Increase protection and restoration of ecosystem functions
- 2. Maintain or enhance fishing, hunting, camping, wildlife viewing and other recreational activities within the WA
- 3. Improve habitat for listed salmonids (and other aquatic species)
- 4. Improve habitat for wildlife species.
- 5. Protect and/or Enhance Critical Infrastructure
 - a. Campgrounds (e.g. North/South camp)

- b. Water intakes/diversions
 - c. Camp Wooten Environmental Learning Center (State Park) – lease adjustment?
 - d. Powerlines
 - e. Tucannon Fish Hatchery and intake system
 - f. Roads
 - g. Priority lakes
 - h. Access points (parking lots and bridges)
 - i. Wooten WA Headquarters
6. Restore and enhance the ecosystem function of the Tucannon River, floodplain, and riparian habitats
- a. Increase density and quality of LWD
 - b. Emphasize the importance of protection and enhancement of riparian vegetation and floodplain functions in the Blue Mountains WA Plan (or in a separate Wooten WA Plan)
 - c. Increase connectivity of the river to its floodplain and enhance riparian habitats
 - d. Restore and enhance natural function of the Tucannon River (e.g. increase sinuosity, reduce confinement)
 - e. Improve riparian and wetland habitats
 - f. Develop a road management plan
 - g. Review and incorporate the results of the Conservation District Assessment on the Wooten WA, recent LIDAR and 2011 consultant assessments and recommendations.

7. Improve condition of the Tucannon Lakes

- a. Develop a lake management plan and secure agreement from all programs on priorities/actions
- b. Reduce impacts of the lakes to the floodplain and river (e.g. river confinement, thermal loading).
- c. Maintain or enhance recreational fishing experience and opportunity.
- d. Bring lakes into WDOE compliance.
- e. Maintain or improve wildlife value of the lakes (and their shorelines)

8. Public Review and Acceptance

- a. Wildlife Area CAG
- b. Snake River Salmon Recovery Board, USFS, WRIA 35 Planning Group, BPA?NPCC, Tribes
- c. General Public (e.g. public meetings, SEPA?, news releases and other public outreach, also in Spanish)
- d. Funding sources

9. OTHER

- a. Improve internal WDFW coordination and integrate engineering maintenance activities with floodplain management plan and District Team staff (e.g. levee and intake screens maintenance activities and coordination)
- b. Coordinate forestry and other statewide or region-wide programs or activities with the floodplain management plan and District Team staff

Potential Initiatives

1. Tucannon Lakes Management Plan to improve condition of the lakes

- a. Identify priorities for restoration and funding
- b. Identify those that might be decommissioned
- c. Identify how to restructure or enhance the priority lakes to meet multiple goals, not just engineering and DOE needs
- d. Develop a plan that designates each of the lakes for decommissioning, restoration and/or reconfiguration.
- e. Identify conceptually how to decommission, restore and/or reconfigure each of the lakes to meet the purposes of the Tucannon Floodplain Management Plan.
- f. Develop a funding strategy, including a prioritized list.
- g. Formulate the above into a Tucannon Lakes Plan as part of the Tucannon Floodplain Management Plan.
- h. Use Plan to obtain funding for implementation.

2. Large Woody Debris

Discussion Points:

- Risks and Risk Management associated with re-introducing LWD
 1. Campgrounds, Camp Wooten State Park
 2. Hatchery
 3. Lakes/Intakes
 4. Power lines, Roads, Bridges
 5. Public Safety
 6. Private lands adjacent to WA

7. DNR request for tree tagging?

- Programmatic management plan for river restoration on the Wooten Wildlife Area
- Management team to monitor projects and make recommendations to the District Team
- Post-Fire Riparian Habitat restoration
- WDFW Conservation Initiative – general discussion and applicability

3. Public Review and Acceptance

- a. SEPA for Floodplain Mgt Plan.
- b. Integrate Floodplain Mgt Plan into Wildlife Area Mgt Plan.
- c. Provide public information forums for final plan

LAKES Management

All of the Tucannon Lakes are in violation of WDOE Dam Safety Regulations. The lake maintenance needs include: dredging to increase depth and capacity, several have leaks in the dikes, some of them confine the river and floodplain, and many of them cause water quality issues in the Tucannon River by increasing water temperatures. Lake restoration will also provide better recreational opportunities and therefore greater (? What analysis of this) economic benefits to the local economy. The Region has pursued funding to rehab the lakes for more than a decade without success.

A Lake Restoration and Management Plan is needed to identify priority actions, maintenance, and restoration of the lakes. This requires all WDFW programs to work cooperatively with a high level of support from Region 1 Management. BPA is currently funding over \$8 million on projects on the Tucannon River through 2018 to benefit Spring Chinook habitat. This is a good opportunity to develop a partnership with BPA and the SRFB to help fund projects that will restore the lakes and provide river habitat benefits for ESA-listed salmonids in the Tucannon River. A synopsis of the lakes and management issues was developed by Glen Mendel and Kari Dingman in 2009.

Discussion Points:

- **Prioritizing Lake Renovation**
 1. Maintenance
 2. ESA issues
 3. Recreation
 4. Hatchery management
 5. Dam safety
 6. Costs
 7. Cost share opportunities
- **Programmatic Lake Renovation and Management Plan**

- Project management
 1. Funding * see 7 above
 2. Project Design and Construction and coordination between engineering Division staff and District Team
 3. Program participation
 4. Public Meetings
 5. SEPA ?

DRAFT